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EDITORIAL

A NEW FABLE OF BIDPAI

In one of the fables of Bidpai that has somehow escaped the diligence of the translator, we are told how once a young sandpiper was sent by its parents to the great college of birds in the Forest of Childar to learn the art of nidification. Arriving at the edge of the forest, the fledgling was presently halted by a brisk young woodpecker, but little older than himself, who let it be known that he was the college examiner. "And we will soon discover," said he, "whether you are so grounded in the essentials of nidification as to be ready for admission to this venerable forest."

"My tutors," began the sandpiper—

"Are doubtless very pretty fellows as sandpipers go," interrupted the woodpecker. "But I do not know them, and, pardon me, I do not care to know them. So we will proceed to the test. And first you may answer me this: Out of all the trees in this forest, which one would you select as most suitable for a nest, taking into account, of course, accessibility to destructive animals, vertical and lateral movement of the boughs, remoteness from food-supply, and particularly the grade and variety of ornithological environment." To this question the candidate replied humbly that in the country he came from trees were unknown. "What? No trees!" screamed the woodpecker. "Where, then, do you wretched birdlings nest?" "Why," returned the sandpiper, "we build our nests hard by the breakers in the yellow sands. They are not so lofty as your tree nests, nor so beautiful, but we sandpipers have always built them so, and we like them as they are. "Dear me," said the woodpecker fretfully. "Here's a nice beginning. No trees! Why, half my questions are about trees. How do you suppose I am to examine such a blockhead? Well, well, we must get on somehow. Perhaps you can tell me how many straws there are in the nest of the great auk." "Indeed, I cannot," replied the sandpiper. "I never had a chance to count them." "Nor anybody else, you little

fool," cried the woodpecker, "for the great auk lays its egg on the bare rock and makes no nest at all. And now if that is all you know about the great art of nest-building, you will see that we cannot admit you to the forest." "But," pleaded the sandpiper, "You have not asked me about the nests that I am acquainted with—the nests that are built on the sands and in the fens and marshes. These nests I know and love. I have visited hundreds, and watched them in building, and I can tell you all about them." "That may be," replied the woodpecker, yawning, "but I am not interested in these inferior sorts of nests myself. Besides, as I hear a worm moving under the bark, I shall soon be too busy to make out a proper set of questions. So run along home and tell your people that if they mean to send their young ones to this college, they will do well to build their nests in boughs hereafter, or, better, bore holes in trees as we woodpeckers do." So saying he broke off the examination.

As for the young sandpiper, after a few unavailing tears, he withdrew and sought the advice of a wise owl in a tree just outside the forest, who in a few hours instructed him so adroitly in the favorite questions and answers of the woodpecker, that on the very next day he was admitted to the forest with the highest honors.